

CDF NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



CONTACT: Jesse Rios
Forest Pest Specialist
(916) 653-9476

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GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTMAS TREE PURCHASE AND DISPOSAL TO PROTECT CALIFORNIA PINES

Sacramento – Thousands of California's pine trees have been killed in the past few years by Pitch Canker. California residents are being advised by a statewide task force to take precautions when purchasing and disposing of Christmas trees this year to help control the spread of this incurable disease.

Pitch Canker, a non-native tree disease, kills native and ornamental pine trees. While every attempt is made to sell only disease-free Christmas trees, some trees could harbor the disease without showing symptoms. "Our concern," explained Steve Staub, Chairman of the California Pitch Canker Task Force, "is that the disease could be transported to areas of the state that don't have pitch canker. And since there is no known cure for pitch canker, limiting its spread is the key to prevention."

The disease is present in 19 coastal and adjacent inland California counties from Mendocino to San Diego on Monterey and bishop pines. As yet, the disease has not been found in the Sierra Nevada. It does not infect humans, pets or other plants.

Concern for pitch canker should not stop citizens from purchasing a Monterey pine Christmas tree. Some simple precautions will help prevent the spread of pitch canker:

1. Purchase and dispose of Monterey pine Christmas trees locally. Don't transport them long distances.
2. Preferred methods of disposal include:
 - o dispose of the tree promptly through a local recycling program, or
 - o dispose at a local landfill which either buries or composts green waste, or
 - o chip the tree and either compost the chips or use them as a mulch
3. If you choose a live Monterey pine and decide to keep it, purchase it locally and do not transport it outside the area.

For further information, contact your local Agricultural Commissioner's office or look at the California Pitch Canker Task Force Web site http://frap.cdf.ca.gov/pitch_canker/.

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